

U.S. AIDES WARY ON DEATH REPORT

They Await Confirmation—
See Regrouping in Cuba

By BENJAMIN WELLES
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WASHINGTON, Oct. 10 —

United States officials reacted cautiously today to Bolivian reports that Ernesto Che Guevara had been killed in an ambush.

There was widespread agreement, however, that Mr. Guevara's death would mean a major defeat for Premier Fidel Castro's campaign of subversion throughout the Western Hemisphere.

"Che was the export manager of Castro's revolution," said one source familiar with Mr. Guevara's activities. "After Castro himself he had the widest romantic appeal of anyone connected with the Cuban revolution. If he's dead—and there's good reason to believe he is—it will mean a serious blow for Castro."

Informants said that the Bolivian Government had notified the United States and other Latin-American governments that a fingerprint check had confirmed that one of the seven guerrillas killed Sunday in a clash with Bolivian forces near Higuera, between Camiri and Valle Grande in southeast Bolivia, was the celebrated revolutionary.

Confirmation Sought

However, officials who recalled previous erroneous reports of Mr. Guevara's death or capture said that they were awaiting further independent confirmation of his identity. Some sources suggested that this might become available within the next few days.

As press and diplomatic reports continued to reach Washington, there was an increasing tendency to believe that the Cuban revolutionary had been killed.

"If Guevara's really dead, it's another in the series of romantic revolutionaries passing from the scene," said one observer. "Nkrumah, Ben Bella, Sukarno are finished. Those left, like Castro, Nasser—even Ho Chi Minh—are facing protracted frustration in carrying out their revolutionary plans."

The goal of United States diplomacy, this source added, must be to assist "pragmatic" leaders to take the place of the revolutionaries wherever possible.

"We should be stepping up—not cutting back—aid to such people as Ankrah of Ghana and Suharto of Indonesia who have replaced the revolutionaries. If we don't help these nonrevolutionary leaders with their population, food and other problems, we'll have ourselves to blame for what follows."

Regrouping Foreseen

Other sources emphasized that the confirmation of Mr. Guevara's death would almost certainly lead to a period of "rethinking and regrouping" in the Cuban regime.

Since last October, when, the sources said, Mr. Guevara and a handful of Cuban associates entered Bolivia clandestinely, the impoverished nation has been the object of a major concentration of revolutionary effort by Premier Castro.

"The Bolivian Army hit the guerrillas before they were properly organized," said one source. "In another six months it would have been more difficult. By then they might have been better trained and dispersed and better supplied by local Communist supporters."

Specialists on Latin America discounted the possibility that Premier Castro might soon attempt some spectacular gesture elsewhere in the hemisphere to distract international opinion and "defy" the United States and its Latin-American allies.

"Castro's been hit so hard in recent months in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Guatemala and now in Bolivia," said one official, "that he'll probably just hole up for a while, lick his wounds and try to figure what he's doing wrong."